

Why the Double???

Posted: October 12, 2011 by Tammie Wunning

So maybe you're wondering *WHY* anyone would want to do a Double Iron race. Isn't a regular Ironman enough?

Well, there are many answers to *MY* "why".

First let's get some of the basics out of the way.

The **Double Iron** is

4.8 mile swim

224 mile bike

52.4 mile run.

so now I'm sure you're really asking **WHY!?!?**

In order to understand we have to back up to the Ironman. I think I always knew~ or at least once I heard about the Ironman~ that I always wanted to be one. I wanted that more than anything in the world. Before I ever did my first tri I saved a full-page newspaper article on the Ironman Championships in 2004~which I've now framed and have hanging on my wall. I didn't even do my first sprint until 2005 and my first Ironman wasn't until 2008. Now I've finished 4 and want to keep doing them until my body tells me I can't do them anymore. Until you've crossed the finish line at an Iron distance event you just can't understand. Many of my Ultramarathon friends may say the same thing about certain ultras. But it's such an incredible feeling. As I've continued in my Iron racing, I've wanted *more*. I want to see what else I can do.

I couldn't tell you when I first heard of the double, triple, Deca IRON races. I just have been intrigued by them since I heard about them. and somewhere along the line I knew ~ and began telling people~ that if I was intrigued by them then ultimately I would end up doing one. I remember starting my research on them years ago. I'm pretty sure I had stumbled upon the website for the double Iron-now run by Steve Kirby. I remember reading about the multiple loops that the athletes would have to complete to finish the race and all I could think was, "man, I DON'T want to bike and run in circles. What Torture!" I think I may have even emailed the RD to see if it really was the multiple loops and that I was assured that "yes, it *is* multiple loops" Kirb... you may have been the RD when I first inquired about it years ago. =)

when I first started looking at them I remember reading about a 10x10. that was 10 iron distance races in 10 days. I think the one I read about was in Michigan. the year that was held there was only one participant-a woman and she finished 5 back to back days of Ironman racing and with a

decent time each day. since I really have no idea when I started researching I have no idea who that woman was. But it didn't matter, I was pretty damn impressed ~ even more so because it was a *woman*. I think once I realized that I had no desire to do the multiple loops, I tucked the information away in one of the recesses of my brain. And so it sat there for quite some time, relatively undisturbed, just simmering... being fueled by the distances I was adding to my training and racing.

Sometime last year, I started searching for the ultimate way to celebrate my 40th. And I found TONS of ultra endurance races I wanted to do. Some, I even said, "I'm not crazy enough to do that...yet." By this point I had realized the Double was going to be held in Tampa. whaaaat? I thought I was ready then and that I was going to do it this past March. But after finished Ironman Cozumel at the end of 2010, I was emotionally and mentally spent. I had hit burnout pretty bad and chucked the idea of racing. so I went up to volunteer and watch. Jen was racing so at least I knew someone who would be out there. It's hard to explain what just being there did for me. As Ironman athletes, we tend to think we're pretty bad-ass. But I was pretty humbled being there. talking to folks who ran 150 mi for fun (cough cough Brian) and seeing these amazing athletes was beyond humbling. I think I wore all of my Ironman gear for a week afterwards just so I could feel like I've accomplished *something*. I'm glad I went to watch because I know there are things that I have to do to prepare myself for a race of this proportion. It's going to be a very crazy experience for me and **yes**, I **am** looking forward to it.

More than a year ago I had no desire to run 100 miles. Just as I once remember thinking that the last thing I wanted to do was to train for a marathon. I remember hearing stories of people who would swim in the Amazon or English channel, or run across Death Valley and I would wonder "why?" But in the back of my mind, there was just enough intrigue to make me think "what if?" Is it possible for me? As my mind has been wandering into the Ultra world I've no longer had the question "why?" on my mind. I no longer have to ask "why?" because "I **get** it."

so have I answered your "why?" Probably not. I need a new challenge. I have to satisfy the little voice in my head that says, "you know you wanna do it", and that whispers, "Can you do it?" I have to show myself that I can. I want to find out exactly what I'm made of. I want to be a true bad-ass- or at least considered "mildly insane" =P

I'm pretty sure there is no good answer for "why?" All I can say is "Trust me. I'll know when I finish."

13 weeks and counting...

Posted: November 29, 2011 by Tammie Wunning²

Now that I've cut down my hours at the running store I've been able to focus more on training. that hurts that bank account, but it's all about priorities, right? I've been building up my long sessions as I could. I've learned from all the racing that I've done that I can't focus on long training too early. 13 weeks seems to be the magic number for me ~ and that's been about the approach I've taken for the Double. even though I've adopted this 13 week regimen, I have still beaten myself up on occasion for not training more. It's a constant battle. With 13 weeks to go, it's time to start really focusing. and I say that like I haven't been training at all. 😊 I've still managed some century rides and 5-6 hours on the trainer. I've been training for the Ancient Oaks 100 mile run so my running has been building. to date, my long swim sessions have been 2 hrs, my longest run has been 30 miles and I did back-to-back century rides this past weekend. I've thought for awhile that part of the reason we train like we do is not so much so we know we can physically get through it, but there are mental spots/obstacles that we have to push through or get past in order to complete an endurance event. when we are training we are always evaluating how we feel and what we're going to need to get through the day. If we don't put in the hours/miles, we'll never figure that stuff out.

One of the things I knew I was going to have to work through was the monotony of doing multiple loops. I started working through this on my long swims. swimming is one place I can just totally get inside my head, it's also one place I can get pretty bored. Some things that are helping me are 1) knowing I just have to *get in and swim*. I have to put in the long session at least one time a week. Other sessions can be shorter, but I *have* to do the long stuff at least 1x. 2) I have started calling my swim sessions my time in the "think tank". I prefer the "creative" sessions, however, I've already had one incredibly "dark" session where I think I "exorcised all of my demons". I was dealing with shit I didn't know I had tucked away in the recesses of my brain. These long sessions have already helped me realize how I was neglecting my hydration and electrolytes while in the pool. It's very easy to neglect all of that during the short swims, but the longer ones definitely require water, sports drink and even Gu. I guess I thought I was immune to needing all of that. =/ I started reading about dehydration while swimming and can say that I know I was showing major symptoms of dehydration after some of those long sessions. now, I'll train smarter. =)

beating the monotony on the bike is tougher. I've been on the trainer for 5-6 hours and wanted to gouge out my eyeballs. I've been struggling with finding a way to deal with 32 loops around Flatwoods park. This weekend I did back-to-back century rides. This was important for me on many levels. 1) I've never ridden more than 30 miles the day after a century. I typically won't ride after a long day on the bike. knowing I could get through 200 miles in 2 days and still feel good was HUGE! 2) On the 2nd day of riding, I did Starkey Park repeats. after about the 3rd one, I realized that it was a lot like riding at Flatwoods. doing the out-and back stretch through the park was equivalent to doing 2 loops at Flatwoods. It also resembled it in the way it looked and how the wind would roll through. 3) Breaking the ride up into 7-14 mile segments helped tremendously. I no longer had to go x amount of miles or feel like I was in the middle of

nowhere. mentally, the repeats ~ while they sounded like a monotonous task ~ were actually more bearable than a long, straight ride. go figure.

The run is coming along. Many may wonder how in the heck I'm gonna get thru a 100 mile run with only having 30 as my longest run since I started training for the Double and Ancient Oaks 100. Heck, *I've* even wondered that. I guess I'll find out on Saturday and Sunday. =) while this next bit of info should really be put into a blog about the 100miler, it's important now. Many ultra plans include back to back long runs i.e. 5 hrs one day and 4 the next. I honestly haven't been able to get into that mindset since I've been trying to keep the cycling and I don't want to give up my "off" day from training. Something that has helped is knowing that the reason the runs are scheduled like that is so that you know what it's like to run when tired, fatigued, and depleted or sick. After 4 Ironman races, I think I know what that's like. And I do not want to sound cocky. *The 100 miler deserves its own respect.* I *KNOW* I will hit places during this run that I've never hit before. I know I will physically and mentally be in a state I've never been. And for as much as I was not looking forward to running 29 loops of a 3.46 mile course. There is a huge amount of comfort in knowing that I will always be within 3.5 miles of aid stations, bathrooms, my gear/food etc. I've also been "training my slow" and my walk. I've also got the support of some pretty amazing friends who will be out there to help me get through it. so we'll see. This race is important so I can work through racing for more than 24 hours. It's important so I can run in the middle of the night through the woods. It's important on levels I don't even know yet! I'm ready to see how I do. I'm ready for this new challenge. **I'm ready to do this!**

Getting to the Double

Posted: March 10, 2012 By Tammie Wunning



I'm sitting here wondering how to wrap my head around writing a blog to recap my Double Iron and I realize that many people can't even wrap their head around completing something like that.

I guess I'll start with the basics.

4.8 mile swim 224 mile bike 52.4 mile run.

all continuous. 36 hours to finish. You can sleep if you want, but the clock keeps ticking. You are required to have a crew ~although many people got through it with only 1 or 2 people to help.

The swim was 76 laps in a 50 meters pool (one lap = 100m), the bike course consisted of a loop of 6.86 miles and we had mileage from the pool into the park. Total bike laps was 31. the run was a 1.74 mile loop. Total laps was 30.

Total race distance **281.2 miles**

If you read my blog "Why the Double?" then you know why I wanted to do this. Once I sent in my registration, I knew I had a nice challenge at hand. When I started training for it I was working 2 jobs and averaging 65 hrs a week. Fitting in training was going to be tough. Things became really crazy in my FT job so I started tapering down the hours of the 2nd. That allowed me some breathing room and so I could start building my training. I also found out around the time that I sent off my registration that I got into an invitation only 100 mile run. so again my head was spinning. I eventually got into a good routine and was able to train. I constantly worried if it was enough, but given my time restraints it was going to have to work. One of the biggest things that helped me during the training was one statement from my friend and TRIPLE Ironman winner, Kellie Smirnoff, ~and how it was about "quality, not quantity of training." It also helped that my 2nd job included coaching so I was able to get in some running.

I am rarely nervous before a race. I can think of probably only 4 races where the nerves really hit me: my first sprint triathlon, Escape from Alcatraz Triathlon, Ancient Oaks 100 mile run and then the Double Iron. Those of you who knew me a couple of years ago, know I went through an extensive battery of tests to determine the cause of some odd chest pain. After being told by my cardiologist that "everything was beautiful" and he never wanted to see me again, it was determined that I was probably just having anxiety attacks. I'd been able to keep the "symptoms" at bay until the Double started getting close. Two days before the race I was really starting to feel overwhelmed and I had a little "conversation" with myself. I remembered how nervous I was before my first sprint tri. I was waiting to start the swim and I heard someone say "It's just like a training day but better." I thought "WHAAAAT??? It's a RACE!!!!" and then it hit me... The

Double was just a really, *really* long training day. It's really funny what that thought actually did for me. Once I had it, I knew I had it under control and I could enjoy the day.

Many of you will probably say something about having to do all those laps. Well, while it seemed monotonous it was really kind of comforting. I was always going to be within a short range of my crew and what I needed. Although I **SWEAR** in every sport the people in charge of lap counting were adding laps to what I needed to do! 😊 Now that I have completed two ultra events with a crazy amount of laps, I can say I think I used the multiple laps as a crutch. I *really* think I stopped more than I would have if there were less laps. Since the Double was in Tampa, I had a lot of people stop by during various stages of the race and I felt like I had to stop and say "Hi" to whoever was there or pose for pics. =) I often had to be reminded by others to keep moving, or I had to keep myself from stopping too much. I also didn't mind stopping because I was not out there to set any records. This was about me finishing something that I had set out to do. So if I took a little long talking-so what? I wanted to enjoy this race and by golly I was gunna.

Once of the most common questions I have been asked is "*How was it?*" And honestly, that's a tough question to answer. It was **everything** I expected. It was tough, it was exhilarating, It was fun, it was long. Did I ever think about quitting? **ABSOLUTELY NOT**. Did I ever ask why was I doing this? I can't say that question even entered my mind. There were definitely times I just wanted to be done, but wanting to be done is completely different from wanting to quit.

People who have known me a long time and know how competitive I had gotten once I started racing asked where I ranked/placed. And I'm not sure if they understood that *it didn't matter*. The only thing that mattered was that **I finished. I finished a Double Iron. I was 1 of 26 finishers. ALL** of the women finished ~granted there were fewer of us out there than men, but we still all finished. Of the men who did not finish, many hit the ½ point on the run.

I don't seem to have enough time or words to get everything out there about my race. I especially don't have enough words to adequately describe how wonderful my crew was. I haven't forgotten about them. But what do you say about a group of people who sacrifice their weekend, getting very little sleep, not eating much but snacks and things, who sit thru the cold, sleep in lawn chairs or in the car, and hold a vigil on you to ensure you get to the finish line??? They talk to you in the middle of the night, they check in on you and keep you company, they ask questions to make sure you're still there. They tell you jokes, they push you when you don't want to go, they feed you and make you take in your nutrition and water. They offer Nutella at the most important time. =) I want to honor them the way I should. It may be in a blog or two down the road-as they deserve their own blog. Shanna and my mom were there from the beginning to end. Justin and Jill : you got me through the nite to the end. Each one of you did wonderful things for me and I was so happy you were there. I couldn't have gotten through this as well as I did without you! You're one of the best crews I could ever ask for! You completely **ROCKED** it out there and I would be honored to have any of you crew for me again! And thanks for showing my mom the ropes! I know she was as appreciative of what you did for me as I am.



The most AWESOMEST crew on the face of the planet!

Casey and Michael, you guys helped more than you could imagine and I'm glad you were there! To my Fit2Run girls: thanks for showing up and being there until I finished. I loved your signs and the beautiful lei. Lavanya, thank you for helping with the swim lap counting and for humbling me beyond belief as you filmed me.

So now about this "little" race...

My plan was to have my mom with me at the start and Shanna would go set up "our spot." and then Shanna would join us at the pool. It worked out perfectly. Mom helped me get set up for the swim and Lavanya filmed me.



I'm ready and happy. Can you tell?

They had turned off the heat in the pool so we wouldn't roast and people could wear wetsuits. The water was 76 deg. That meant no wetsuit for me. I knew I would be way too warm in it for 4.8 miles. After I got in and swam the first lap I knew I made the right decision.

We were stacked 6 people in a lane. Sometimes it flowed well and others, it just didn't seem to work. We stacked ourselves in the order in which we thought we would swim (fastest to slowest) and I put myself a little closer to the back of the group since I didn't want to be in anyone's way. There were many times that I wanted to pass someone but I rarely did as I thought I would spend more energy than it was worth.



Look how cold we are!!



Swimming in the draft!!!

Lavanya was there from my running group to help with lap counting and timing. Trixie was timing in the lane next to me. It was so great to have you there! I was able to see the clock from my lane and somewhere at what I thought was the halfway point, I finally decided to ask what lap I was on. By looking at the clock and the # I thought I had done, I thought I was swimming faster than I anticipated. When I pop my head out of the water to ask, the number was at least 3 laps less than what I anticipated. Man! I can't believe I already got off track!



just keep swimming. just keep swimming, swimming.

So I keep swimming and decide that I'm not going to ask again until I think I've hit 60. This time, I'm CERTAIN I've got it right. So I ask. 60? No?!? 56 ?? WHAT?? Oh that can't be! How I thought I made up the previous missing laps is beyond me. I finally hit 70 and then the last 6 laps just crept along. Finally I hit 76. I'm ready to jump out of the water but wait! I don't think I can pull myself out. Stupid arms. Isn't there a ladder somewhere? Out of the water, mom helps me dry off and then I head off to the locker room to change.

The one thing I can say about the swim is that I am VERY thankful I had my wits about me to take in my nutrition as I had done in training. My plan was to drink water and/or Gatorade every 1000m. There was a brief moment where I almost pushed myself past that mark -especially early into it as I was feeling good and it felt like it might be too early as no one else was stopping. Surely, I can't be the only person who needs to stop? I kind of felt foolish stopping so early but I knew that sticking with nutrition early would possibly save me later. And I truly think that making sure I was getting my electrolytes gave me an edge as I moved into the day

To be continued...

Double Iron Part 2: Cycling, cycling and more cycling. And ...Bigfoot???

Posted: March 13, 2012 By Tammie Wanning



Look at Ben.... all race ready!

The great thing about ultra is that you don't necessarily have to rush thru everything. There are plenty of people who compete in ultras and are crazy fast. I keep thinking that one day, as I get more confident in my abilities as an ultra endurance athlete, my times will start to drop. It's like when I first started doing tris, eventually I got much, much faster. This too will come in the ultra world. Once again, I'm getting used to pushing my body and mind further than I had before. I know I could have saved time here and there as I'm sure I wasted a lot of time but in the grand scheme of things it wasn't going to matter.

Today's goal was on getting through the race and enjoying it/ and being comfortable as much as I could. So with that in mind, I prepared for the bike. since I was going to have my crew available to me I knew I could have just throw together some things to just get me through until I saw them again, but I wanted to also make it so I wouldn't have to stop right away. I was looking at a long day out there and I wanted to be ready. After I emerged from the locker room, Mom, Shanna, and Lavanya helped me get ready for the bike. they lathered me with sunscreen, fed me my PBJ & Gatorade, Lavanya took more pics and then I had some endurolytes, hugs cheers and I'm off.



Mom, please blend it in!!!



Almost Ready!!!



Where's my bike?!!

I leave the parking lot and another racer had turned so I followed him, and as soon as I did, I knew that it wasn't the right place to turn. We hit Bruce B Downs and I knew we weren't supposed to hit BBD yet so I turned around and went the direction I thought we were supposed to go. More racers. Phew! The 2.5 miles from the pool to the park were the most worrisome for me as we had to weave in and out of a bike trail and thru intersections on Bruce B. downs where traffic and construction were pretty bad. It had been decided at the pre-race dinner that if we wanted to have our crew drive us to the park due to safety concerns we could take a 30 min penalty and we wouldn't be counted in the IUTA rankings. I wanted to get thru as much of the bike as possible during daylight so I opted to do the route as laid out. I believe only a few people actually took the 30 min penalty. Once we got to the park we checked in with Jeff rode about a mile, turned around, checked back in with Jeff and then headed back into the main loop. Somewhere in the very low 20s I heard a "boing" and noticed that a piece of metal or spring had popped out of my bottom bracket. You've *got* to be kidding me! As long as I've been riding I've never had anything like that happen. I said a little prayer so I could get back to the front of the loop to have the mechanic look at it. I pulled off, the mechanic looked at it and sent me on my way. She told me that to stop again if it gave me problems but it was fine to ride on it. I worried about that thing for the remainder of the 224 miles. And on a side note, when I took Ben back to the shop that had installed the bottom bracket, the owner of the shop said he'd never seen anything like that either!

My original plan was to stop no less than every 3 laps and take a longer break around every 7-8 laps. Unfortunately the wind and heat altered that plan. I was going thru water quicker than I anticipated and the wind was beating me down so that I felt like stopping more. There were times I couldn't ride more than 13 mph because of the winds and certainly some moments I thought I'd get blown off the bike. We just couldn't get a break from it. Even at night, the wind seemed to be an issue. It calmed down a bit but there was no doubt it was still working against us. All my cycling buddies had reminded me prior to race day that the wind was my friend. Well, I can tell you *I tried* to make peace with the wind but it just wasn't interested in being my friend that day!
 =(



Here we go 'Round the Mulberry Bush!



whheeee!

Somewhere between 5pm and 7pm, more people showed up to watch and cheer! When I came around that loop for the first time and I noticed a lot more people out there I knew, I was so excited. It was fun cheering to everyone as I rode thru the timing stand and back out on the course.

As much as I wanted to stop and say “hello” I knew I couldn’t stop. Darkness was getting close and I had to get in as many miles as possible. When I finally pulled off to stop, I grabbed some food, took a potty break and had Bjorn and Shanna add the lights to my bike. We added 3 lights on the bike and I wore a headlamp. I took one lap around and as soon as the darkness hit, I realized 3 lamps were not enough so I stopped and we added a 4th light to the bike. Riding at night was not near as bad as I thought it would be. The worst was at the north end of the loop where there were no lights and if you weren’t paying attention you could miss the turn. Kirby and the crew eventually put a flashing light up but it really wasn’t enough.



Did you see that?
WHAT was it????

Prior to the race, there was a lot of talk about the critters out there. I had been out to Flatwoods enough to know that at any time a deer, wild boar, turkeys, vultures, squirrel, rabbit, snakes, armadillos, etc could wander into your path. Yes, there is a gator out there and I’ve only seen him once. Apparently, Kirby’s crew was keeping track of the critter sightings~ which worried my poor mum ~ especially the thought that there was a gator out there. During the day, I had only seen a snake and I saw 2 owls at night. I was most worried about the boars as they are

black as night and having one wander into your path while on the bike would not be fun. At one point I was thinking about all the critters out there and I was kind of disappointed because I hadn’t seen more.



And then, for some reason I began to wonder if I’d see **BIGFOOT**. I mean I *was* in the middle of the woods after all!

And then I thought, “**No silly. Bigfoot is not in FL. We have the Skunk Ape here.**” (not that the skunk ape has EVER been sighted in Tampa!~or at least not that I know of!)

While I was apparently delirious, the nighttime was taking a toll on the others. I started seeing some carnage out there. There were people who were sick, had bonked, and I heard stories of folks who had ridden off the trail-either because they had nodded off or simply lost focus. There were times where I was completely alone and others where I had someone to ride with and keep me company. I was getting tired. I’m not sure what the mileage was when I was really fighting it. I decided to go one more lap and then take a break. I got off the bike and told the crew that I was going to sleep for 20 min. I crawled in the pup tent and laid down. I could still hear everything and it was really funny because my crew was almost silent but everyone around us decided that was the moment they wanted to stop in front of our area and chat. I don’t think I really slept, but getting off the bike and resting with my eyes closed did wonders. I got back on



the bike and finished it up. Sorry there's not much more to add but how much can you say about riding in circles?!? ;-0) After I got off the bike for the final time, the crew made me eat, I changed my top, shoes etc and got ready for my run.

To be continued...

Double Iron Part III: A little Run and then We're done!

Posted: March 14, 2012 by Tammie Wunning



I was feeling pretty good when I hit the run and was able to keep a good pace for a while. Justin, Jill and Shanna all ran with me throughout the nite. I was never alone on any laps out there. We had a pretty good system figured out: whoever was running with me would hit the tent before I ran up to the timing area so they could get anything I needed and have it ready by the time I got back to the tent. As I said before, they ROCKED it. I wasn't taking in much other than endurolytes and water as I just didn't want it. I was trying to drink my Cytomax too and take in some Gu, but I wasn't taking in what I'm used to taking in. I was getting really tired out there and kept wishing I had mastered the "sleeping while running" skill I've heard people say they can do. It was taking everything I had to keep my eyes open and keep moving. About an hour or so before dawn, I was running with Justin and I started begging him to let me just sit for 10 min. I didn't have to sleep. Just let me sit. And Justin says, "No. Are you hurting, in pain, having any issues?" Me: "No" Justin: "Then keep running. You know it will be daylight soon. If you stop, you might make things worse. You're feeling good right now. Stopping is not good right now." I'm not sure if I cursed out loud, but I certainly felt it. I also knew he was right. So I continued to run, or slog.

Eventually daylight broke and yes, everything changed. I knew it wouldn't be long before some of my cheering section showed up and I would be finished. An interesting thing about when daylight hit, is you were able to finally see how people were doing. You could see the emotion on their face, you could see if they were in pain or if their body seemed to be breaking down. But this is when you got to really talk to more of the athletes. There were laps and stories I shared with other athletes on the bike but that was different. Getting through the run and sharing that time with the other athletes is what formed that bond with so many of them. Even when there was a language barrier, there was a feeling that we all understood. There are no words to really describe it and now, as I'm writing this, I'm getting choked up thinking about it. In doing these ultra events we find out more about who we really are and we know that the others on the course are all going thru the same things. Pushing ourselves to the end. Finishing what we came here to do.

During one lap, I finally started talking to Wayne Kurtz ~engaging in more than the encouragement to get through it. Part of my holding back at first was because I might have been

a little star struck. In my mind, his ultra race resume was pretty impressive. (and the race resumes for the athletes who were there were all pretty impressive! And more on that later!) Anyways, he totally cracked me up. Wayne is preparing for a DOUBLE DECA Iron race in Mexico. And the DOUBLE DECA is **20** ironman races. I don't know if you get 20 days or just a smidge longer to complete them, but I'll worry about that later ;-P And most of the conversation was Wayne trying to convince me to do the Double Deca. "No, not this year?" he'd ask. "Ok, how about the DD in Italy next year?" he was relentless! => But such a super sweet and funny guy!

There was a group stationed right in front of the timing area and aside from my own cheering section, these guys were awesome. They would always cheer for me as I came thru. When daylight broke they began chanting and spelling out my name as I hit the timer. It was awesome!

Casey showed up in the morning and ran with me for a few laps. It was so great catching up with her. Even after she ran back to the other side of the park to finish up her long run, she came back on her bike and rode with me as I ran with some of the ladies from Fit2Run.



Me and some of the girls?

I had a whole slew of people come out from the Fit2run group that I help coach. It was so nice to have them out there. I stopped to catch up with them and there were many photo ops.



Some pretty amazing people!

Since I didn't really know how many people would be running with me I forgot to mention to them to bring their running gear if they wanted to run some laps with me. Shanna in her wonderful ways actually offered to let a couple of them borrow some of her gear and clothes so they could run with me. I'm sorry I didn't get to run with them all. But the Honey Badgers made me some wonderful signs and spent the day out there until I finished.



You ladies ROCK and I'm so glad I got to share this day with you.



ohhh check out the support!!

My pop and Michael also showed up again on Saturday. I had some great support out there and you all made it that much more fun!!



Me and My Pop!

When I first started running I didn't count laps and I wouldn't ask them what lap I was on. I wasn't even running with a Garmin. As people showed up they would ask me and my response was "I don't know. I don't want to know." Since the lap counting was messing with me in the swim and bike, I had resolved not to ask until I was certain I was

past the halfway point. When I finally asked, I was about to start lap 17.

Thank goodness I was past halfway! As we got closer to the end I told the crew and group the wrong number of laps to go as my "bad math" kicked in. I finally got it right and we were on track. A funny thing happened after I got past "7 laps to go." I started saying 6 & 1/2 to go at the turnaround. Every lap from that point forward became the smaller number with the "and a half" to go or after this, only x amount to go. The other athletes were also doing it. There was light at the end of the tunnel. =)



"sprinting" to the end!

I finally hit the bell lap and I asked the crew to run it in with me. I warned them that I was probably going to get emotional as we crossed the line and reminded myself I had to keep it together until I did.

Finally we are within the last quarter mile. Wayne Kurtz's wife actually met me as I approached the timing area so she could give me the American Flag to carry across the finish line. I take the flag and so proudly carry it as I'm running in. The National Anthem is being played. Here come the tears. And That's it! I'm done!!!



Finishing the Double. What an awesome moment!

The Fit2Run ladies gave me a beautiful lei. There were pics and then that was it. I took off my shoes, drank my beer and just sat there. Glad to be done. And *thrilled* to be among the ranks of the DOUBLE IRON FINISHERS. I also just sat there because the minute I sat down, my quads locked up and I wasn't moving. =)

To wrap up the Double IRON recap, I have to talk about the awards luncheon. Unfortunately, I did not get to stay for the whole thing as I had to take my mom to the airport but the time I spent there was beyond what I could have imagined. After every Ironman race, there is a feeling of camaraderie among the finishers. There's usually a lot of congratulations, pats on the back and handshakes. For the Double, this feeling was magnified tenfold.



I'm Done!



First Timers! There was no doubt that we formed a special bond. As soon as people walked through the door there was an indescribable emotion toward that person and knowing they finished. We didn't just exchange handshakes or congrats. We hugged. We cried. Seeing the people who looked like they were on death's bed during the race at the awards luncheon was unreal. You were that much happier knowing they pushed through and finished. We accomplished a huge feat and there wasn't anything that could compare to it.

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Three first time finishers and one proud mama!!

One of the nicest things that was said to me was from Guy Rossi. I can't even begin to tell you all of the races he's done. He's amazing. 63 years old and done more in his life than I could imagine. I was

excited to see him during the pre-race dinner and every time I saw him on the course I made sure to at least give him a “go guy!” when we were on the run I enjoyed getting him to smile when we passed each other. When we were standing in line he apologized because his “English wasn’t so good” and said, “If there was an award for the nicest person on the course, it would go to you. ~aside from my wife!”

I’ve mentioned a few times about the impressive race resumes of the folks who were competing in this event. The stories everyone had were amazing. And the best moment was when I was listening to the stories on one end of my table when I catch part of a conversation on the other end. I kept hearing things about a “swim” and that he was known as the “swimming guy” I’m not sure what prompted the question, but I just had to interrupt “Excuse me. Did you swim the English Channel?” his response was just a very casual ‘yes’ . I know we talked more but all I could think was “holy shit! I’m sitting across from a guy who actually swam the English Channel and he’s not making a big deal about it!” I’m in a *whole* different league now. Apparently while I was having that thought my mom had it as well. She told me that over the course of the weekend she kept hearing things like DECA Iron and Double Deca and she knew that this was opening up a whole new world for me. The best part she wasn’t worried at all.



My beautiful finisher's plaque!

